

Washington Island Town Board
Public Statement regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic
Last Updated: March 20, 2020

To Washington Island full-time residents, seasonal residents, families, businesses, and visitors:

Washington Island should not be considered a “safe haven” for those seeking to avoid the Coronavirus. On the contrary, Coronavirus cases are likely to occur on Washington Island, and the consequences to those on the Island could be more devastating than in mainland locations with greater access to medical resources and supplies. The Island is home to numerous individuals with compromised immune systems, as well as many aging and elderly residents who are at greatest risk.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has now been identified in most areas of the U.S., including northeastern Wisconsin. It is highly contagious, and is especially dangerous to those with compromised immune systems. As a result, health officials are discouraging travel of any kind, and local health providers strongly recommend against travel to Washington Island. Beyond the imminent threat of exposure from those traveling in from other parts of the state and country, the Island lacks the medical resources and facilities necessary to provide care to those who may be affected.

Unfortunately, this will impact the plans of those who normally return to Washington Island in the spring, as well as family members wishing to visit Island relatives, and other visitors. Island residents may encounter a delay in obtaining essential supplies, and travel on or off the Island is discouraged. Our Island businesses and services are forced to take special precautions to limit potential exposure and transmission of illness.

For those with no choice but to travel to Washington Island, including those residing on the Island who leave and plan to return, it is essential to take all of the following precautions for self-isolation:

- Abide by all COVID-19 precautions established by the CDC and other government agencies, as well as the Town Board resolution and transportation companies serving Washington Island.
- Avoid exposure to other persons at the harbor/marina, and all other points of access. Avoid sharing vehicles and/or riding in others' vehicles, where the virus can easily be transmitted.
- Upon arrival, plan to self-isolate by remaining on your private premises for no fewer than 14 days. Like elsewhere in Wisconsin, our food service establishments are unable to provide dine-in accommodations, by order of the Governor's Office, until COVID-19 precautions are lifted statewide. At time of this release KK Fiske, Karley's, and Middle Bar are providing limited take-out and/or delivery service, along with limited hours. Mann's food store, the Mercantile and Death's Door Fuel remain open at this time.
- If you have signs or symptoms of flu-like illness, including fever, cough, congestion, nausea, diarrhea, shortness of breath, and/or body aches and pains, consult your physician immediately and before any travel. Please do not travel to Washington Island if you have any alternatives whatsoever.

Washington Island Ferry Line has established COVID-19 response plans, and will abide by all recommendations from CDC and local health officials.

Coronavirus testing is available on Washington Island. The Washington Island Clinic will continue to operate. Anyone needing medical attention is asked to call the Clinic first, no walk-ins will be accepted. ALL patients will be evaluated over the phone by the provider with on-site visits scheduled for those with acute illnesses or urgent needs. Testing for COVID-19 is available for those with pertinent symptoms.

If you are returning to the Island, please follow the CDC guidelines and self-isolate for 14 days. After 14 days continue to practice social distancing, wash hands frequently, and avoid non-essential travel.

If you are already on Washington Island and feel that you, or someone else in your family, party or household, are experiencing flu-like symptoms, remain isolated in place (i.e., in your home or cottage) and contact the Clinic for further instructions. Avoid contact with all other persons. If you experience an emergency requiring urgent medical attention and/or are in respiratory distress, call 9-1-1 and alert the dispatcher if anyone in your party or household has flu-like symptoms so that EMS responders can don appropriate personal protective equipment before entering.

Travel and self-isolation precautions will remain in effect for Washington Island until they are lifted statewide by health officials and state government.

We will update this statement periodically as appropriate.

These websites provide guidelines for dealing with the current health emergency:

Local – Town of Washington <https://washingtonisland-wi.gov/>

Washington Island Ferry Line <https://wisferry.com/>

Washington Island Community Health Program (WICHP)

<https://www.facebook.com/Washington-Island-Community-Health-Program-WICHP-334806146564241/>

Washington Island Police <https://washingtonisland-wi.gov/police-department/>

State - Wisconsin Department of Health & Human Services <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/>

National – Centers for Disease Control & Prevention https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2Findex.html

If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact:

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